

# U.S. reports gains in arms accord

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Washington—The White House reported yesterday there have been "major advances" toward agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union on limiting production of offensive and defensive strategic weapons.

The advances came, the White House said, through "confidential exchanges" in recent weeks between President Nixon and Leonid I. Brezhnev, secretary general of the Soviet Communist party.

Ronald I. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, would not discuss details of any possible arms agreement beyond saying that Mr. Nixon and Mr. Brezhnev had moved toward "broadening the scope of the offensive freeze"—that is, the proposed agreements under which both nations would not add to present stockpiles of certain missile systems and other arms.

Arms limitation is the top agenda item for Mr. Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union, which is scheduled to begin in just 20 days. Mr. Ziegler would not predict whether the arms control negotiations now under way in Helsinki will produce agreement before then.

The White House statement came late yesterday afternoon after Mr. Nixon met for more than an hour with his chief foreign policy advisers and Ambassador Gerard C. Smith, the chief U.S. negotiator in Helsinki.

It was treated as a major announcement. Reporters who regularly cover the White House were telephoned and cautioned not to skip the afternoon press briefing. No formal written statement as issued, but Mr. Ziegler read carefully from prepared notes.

"Over the past several weeks," he read, "the President has had a number of confidential exchanges with Mr. Brezhnev concerning SALT [the strategic arms limitation talks] to see whether the major remaining issues in these negotiations could be

solved so an agreement covering both defensive and offensive weapons could be completed by an early date.

## New Soviet instruction hope

"On the basis of those exchanges the President had concluded that the possibilities of reaching agreement have substantially increased . . .

"The President has today directed Ambassador Smith to return to Helsinki with new instructions which, together with the new instructions he is confident the Soviet representative will receive from his government, can lead to an agreement which is mutually acceptable."

The major issue over which Soviet and U.S. negotiators have disagreed up to now has been the U.S. desire to include missile-launching submarines in the "freeze" on offensive weapons. The Soviet Union, which is far behind the U.S. in missile subs, has refused, agreeing to freeze only land-based missiles.

It had been reported widely after the last round of arms talks in Vienna that the submarine issue probably would be left for later negotiation.

Conceivably, Mr. Ziegler's reference to a "broadening of the offensive freeze" could mean the Soviet position on submarines had changed. He refused to answer any questions, however, on the outlines of agreement reached in the Nixon-Brezhnev messages.

## Means not revealed

As is customary, the White House would not disclose the means by which Mr. Nixon and Mr. Brezhnev communicated. Mr. Ziegler did say, however, that arms limitation was one of the topics discussed when Henry A. Kissinger, the President's chief foreign affairs adviser, was in Moscow last month.

Dr. Kissinger and his deputy, Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Haig, sat in at yesterday's meeting, along with William P. Rogers, the Secretary of State; Melvin R. Laird, the Secretary of Defense; Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, the chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Richard Helms, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Helsinki meetings are the seventh and crucial round of the strategic arms limitation meetings, which began in 1969. This round began March 28. Both the Soviet Union and the U.S. are reported anxious to reach some agreement on stopping the arms race by the time Mr. Nixon arrives in Moscow.